others. When she was finished I asked her to hand the receiver back to me. I told the operator that I was the support worker at Emile Durkheim House, a residential treatment facility for people with mental illness. The woman she'd just spoken to was delusional. There was no weapon. There was no danger. She'd suspected as much. Samantha's language was formulaic. She'd been around too many workers.

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The snow crunched under my five-dollar Goodwill shoes. The cobbled front yard of the House was littered with the debris of pin-money envelopes and cigarette packs, butts and ashes, pop cans, etc. It spilled into the next yard. There were yellow bags of sidewalk salt beside the railing on the porch, but I nearly slipped on the icy burlap runner. Laura hadn't salted it yet.

During shift change in the office Babs had neatly arranged everything in front of her on the little round table. The stapler, the staple remover, and the paper-clip container were lined up beside the ruler. A yellow pad was in front of her. She'd written a few notes about what had happened from midnight till 8 A.M. There was a bulb on the third floor landing that needed changing. Ellie needed pin money; otherwise, she couldn't get her morning pop. Babs must have been bored at 3 A.M. She'd peeked into the pin money